



The Lowell Folk Festival - the largest free folk festival in the nation

7

INSTITUTIONAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



Goal Statement

Lowell will actively partner with institutions and cultural organizations, which are key components of the economic and social vitality of the community.

Educational, medical, and cultural institutions are major assets to a community, as they provide employment opportunities, increase tourism, and enhance the quality of life for City residents. Lowell strongly benefits from the presence of such entities as UMass Lowell, Middlesex Community College, Lowell General Hospital, and the Lowell National Historical Park, among others, and it is important for the City to cultivate effective public-private partnerships that utilize the resources provided by these institutions.

**Figure 7-1
Institutional Development Along the Concord River**



The presence of strong institutional and cultural organizations in the City helps establish and strengthen Lowell's identity as the center of its region. Arts and cultural entities play a key role in shaping and promoting Lowell's image and character as a unique urban environment, which attracts the diverse and creative populations who will increasingly drive our economy. The institutions of higher education enable Lowell to cultivate both an educated workforce to attract larger employers and national retailers of today, but also breeds dynamic and innovative young companies that will drive the economy of tomorrow.

7.1 Recommendations and Action Steps:

7.1.1 WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LEADING MEDICAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO ESTABLISH AND STRENGTHEN THEIR GEOGRAPHIC IDENTITIES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AND MINIMIZE INSTITUTIONAL SPRAWL.

Action Step: Define institutional development areas around the major campuses and focus appropriate medical, educational, and governmental land uses within these areas.

Action Step: Develop a special zoning district at University Avenue near UMass Lowell's North Campus to allow for denser and higher residential development with retail uses at street level as a means of encouraging the construction of off-campus student housing with structured parking, concentrating student retail development, and reducing the University's impact on the neighborhood and the housing market.

Figure 7-2
UMass Lowell, North Campus



Figure 7-3

Saints' Memorial Medical Center (Left) and Lowell General Hospital (Right)



Action Step: Encourage the continued efforts of all leading institutions to improve their physical campus environments and promote continued capital investment in their Lowell campuses.

Action Step: Improve the gateways and entry routes through the City used by the large number of annual visitors to each campus.

Action Step: Facilitate transportation alternatives, including improved pedestrian and bicycle routes as well as shuttle service connecting UMass' campuses, the downtown, and the Gallagher Terminal, to serve the needs of students, staff, faculty, and other institutional patrons to reduce the need for expansive parking lots and expensive parking structures on the institutional campuses.

7.1.2 MAINTAIN ACCESSIBILITY OF QUALITY HEALTH CARE AND PROMOTE THE PROFILE AND REPUTATION OF LOWELL'S MAJOR MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS.

Action Step: Support the fiscal stability of local medical institutions.

Action Step: Promote local hospitals as regional alternatives to Boston and support the development of facilities and infrastructure required to insure that they can fulfill this role.

7.1.3 WORK TO ESTABLISH LOWELL AS A REGIONAL CENTER FOR ARTS AND CULTURE.

Action Step: Continue to actively promote current cultural establishments and work to attract new organizations that support the arts.

Action Step: Create more display venues for local artists, such as new art galleries and the establishment of a Museum of Contemporary Art.

Action Step: Create an "All Museum" Pass to attract tourists and encourage them to visit all of Lowell's cultural institutions for one flat fee, with a portion of the proceeds dedicated to a collective marketing fund.

Figure 7-4

Lowell National Historical Park



Figure 7-5
The Revolving Museum



Action Step: Establish a concert hall venue with approximately 600-700 seats to accommodate a range of performances that would complement the offerings of Lowell's existing venues.

Action Step: Capture the diverse arts programming of Middlesex Community College and UMass Lowell as part of the efforts to promote and organize the City's arts community.

7.1.4 ACTIVELY PROMOTE AND STRENGTHEN THE DOWNTOWN LOWELL ARTS DISTRICT.

Action Step: Target housing subsidies and affordable housing production in the Downtown toward artist residents.

Action Step: Aggressively market Lowell as a community that welcomes and embraces its resident artists.

Figure 7-6
Downtown Artist's Studio



Action Step: Partner with the Cultural Organization of Lowell and local artists to establish appropriate design standards for artists' studios and live/work spaces. Share these standards with developers and use them to evaluate proposals for special permits for artist developments.

Action Step: Cultivate a population of professionals and other potential patrons in Downtown Lowell and the City as a whole who will support the Arts District by purchasing art, attending cultural events, and encouraging the creative atmosphere in the area.

Action Step: Create a program to fill vacant or underutilized storefront windows in the Downtown with a revolving collection of local arts, crafts, and artifacts from various archives.

Figure 7-7
Public Art in Boarding House Park



7.1.5 INCREASE THE VISIBILITY OF THE ARTS IN THE COMMUNITY TO STRENGTHEN THE PERCEIVED ROLE OF ART AND CULTURE IN THE CITY.

Action Step: Encourage and highlight current artists through programs, such as the artists' open studios event in Downtown Lowell.

Action Step: Develop a concerted effort to promote local artists by exhibiting quality public art throughout Downtown and the neighborhoods.

7.1.6 INTEGRATE THE EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH CURRICULA AT UMASS LOWELL AND MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE (MCC) WITH THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FABRIC OF THE COMMUNITY TO HELP ADDRESS TANGIBLE NEEDS IN LOWELL.

Action Step: Establish a structured partnership among UMass, MCC, the City of Lowell, and local employers that utilizes the research skills and facilities of UMass faculty and graduate students to assist with projects that benefit the City's continued development and promote the entrepreneurial economy.

Action Step: Assist UMass Lowell and Middlesex Community College in constructing curricula that support local and regional industry needs, including the cultivation of a creative and adaptive workforce with strong problem solving experience.

Action Step: Help UMass Lowell and Middlesex Community College develop the flexibility to adapt their curricula to industry demands.

Action Step: Encourage continued partnerships between the Lowell School Department and the City's higher education institutions that address the needs of the community.

Action Step: Increase public education budgets for high-growth fields, boosting the number of graduates in these fields.

Action Step: Encourage the state, the UMass system, and the community college system to grant greater fiscal autonomy and decision-making authority to the local institutions.

Figure 7-8
New Campus Center at UMass Lowell



7.1.7 CAPITALIZE ON THE CREATIVE AND INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL OF LOWELL'S INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO FOSTER ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

Action Step: Encourage faculty and staff to purchase homes in Lowell, particularly in the downtown district through homebuyer incentives.

Action Step: Encourage the construction of on- and off-campus graduate student housing, so that these students can live in Lowell.

Action Step: Strengthen the physical and conceptual connections between the UMass campus and the downtown to draw more students into the downtown for shopping, dining and cultural activities.

Action Step: Promote partnerships between the Convention and Visitors Bureau and UMass to increase the marketing of Lowell businesses and destinations to attendees at academic conferences.

Figure 7-9
Conversion of Federal Building to Middlesex Community College's New Library



Action Step: Encourage Lowell residents, who are not directly affiliated with the university, to take advantage of cultural and academic offerings at UMass Lowell.

Action Step: Promote Lowell events to UMass and MCC alumni.